



# Valley Forge National Historical Park Initiates a Major Plan for the Future

## Welcome—Please Join Us

Valley Forge National Historical Park is the place where General George Washington and 12,000 hungry, ill and exhausted soldiers endured every kind of hardship—because they believed in the promise of freedom. A century later, the land was set aside as a park to commemorate the bravery, determination and endurance of the members of the Continental Army and their fellow Americans who risked everything in the attempt to gain independence.

The park is the place where hundreds of thousands of people come with their families and friends to walk the grounds, learn about this compelling story, and enjoy a connection to an essential part of our nation's history. They stroll, bicycle, picnic and fish among approximately 3,500 acres of beautiful open space, tall grass meadows, forests and waterways. Today, the park is at the core of the busiest crossroads in Pennsylvania—a burgeoning suburb that is a highly desirable place to live,

work and shop. Everyone in the region has a stake in preserving a quality of life that now is threatened as sprawl overtakes the Pennsylvania countryside.

These qualities of the park are the foundation of planning for the future. How do we best preserve the precious historic resources, share the essential educational messages and commemorate the meaning of the encampment? How do we preserve the open space, natural resources and scenic values that are so beloved and that are essential for wildlife? How can the National Park Service best work with neighboring communities to plan the future?

We invite you to participate in developing answers to these questions. This newsletter describes a two-year planning process that will result in basic guidelines for the quality and kinds of experiences visitors to the park will have; the development of new facilities

for visitors; the preservation and management of cultural and natural resources; public roads within and surrounding the park; and other important decisions.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to imagine and implement an exciting and sustainable future for Valley Forge. We intend to communicate and consult with all individuals and groups of the interested public in this planning process. There will be many opportunities for you to share your insight, concerns and support for this remarkable national park. Your thoughtful participation is essential.

Sincerely,

Arthur L. Stewart  
Superintendent, Valley Forge NHP



***To see men without clothes  
to cover their nakedness,  
without blankets to lie  
upon, without shoes...is  
a proof of patience and  
obedience which, in my  
opinion, can scarcely  
be paralleled.***

— General George Washington

## What Is a General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement?

General management plans (GMP) identify the overall direction for future management of national parks. They take a long-range, broad conceptual view, answering the question “what kind of place does the community and the nation want this park to be?” GMPs provide a framework for managers to use when making decisions about such issues as how best to protect resources, what levels and types of uses are appropriate, what facilities should be developed, and how people should access the park.

All concepts and actions in a GMP must be consistent with federal law, including the reasons Congress established the park, the National Park Service (NPS) Organic Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. NPS policies also direct what the planning process can and cannot consider.

The plan will describe the general path the NPS will follow in managing Valley Forge NHP over the next 15 to 20 years. It will establish goals for resource conditions and visitor experiences that would be appropriate for each part of the park, and identify the strategies for achieving those conditions. Locations for development, including the future National Center for the American Revolution (see page 3), will be identified. Boundary modifications could be recommended, if appropriate.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act, the GMP will be developed as part of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The GMP/EIS will identify significant issues, present a reasonable range of management alternatives and analyze the environmental impacts of each of the alternatives. There are opportunities for public involvement and comment at each step in the process.

## Why Is Valley Forge NHP Nationally Significant?

The U.S. Congress sets aside as national parks places that represent outstanding aspects of our natural and cultural heritage, to ensure they receive the highest standards of protection. The park's significance statement identifies the resources and values central to managing the park and expresses the importance of the park to our national heritage. Understanding what is nationally significant about a park helps managers make decisions that preserve the resources and values that were the basis for establishment of the park.

*Valley Forge NHP is nationally significant as the location of the 1777-78 winter encampment of the Continental Army under General George Washington. Few places evoke the spirit of patriotism and*

*independence, represent individual and collective sacrifice or demonstrate the resolve, tenacity and determination of the people of the United States to be free as does Valley Forge. The historic landscapes, structures, objects, and archeological and natural resources at Valley Forge are tangible links to one of the most defining events in our nation's history. Here the Continental Army under Washington's leadership emerged as a cohesive and disciplined fighting force. The Valley Forge experience is fundamental to both American history and American myth and remains a source of inspiration for Americans and the world.*



## What Is the Purpose of Valley Forge NHP?

Valley Forge NHP was established by the U.S. Congress in 1976, after more than 80 years as Pennsylvania's first state park. A statement of the park's purpose explains why the park was established as part of the national park system and provides the foundation for park management and public use.

*The purpose of Valley Forge NHP is to educate and inform present and future generations about the sacrifices and achievements of General George Washington and the Continental Army at Valley Forge, and the people, events, and legacy of the American Revolution, through preservation of the cultural and natural resources that embody and commemorate the Valley Forge experience and the American Revolution, and provision of opportunities for enhanced understanding.*

## What Is the Mission of Valley Forge NHP?

A park's mission is a vision for the future and articulates, in broad terms, the ideas that the NPS strives to achieve.

*Valley Forge NHP educates the American people about one of the most defining events in our nation's history by preserving the natural and cultural resources that commemorate the encampment of the Continental Army at Valley Forge in 1777-78.*

# Partnerships Are Essential to the Well-being of the Park

The park depends on able partners to share in carrying out the mission of education and preservation. The Friends of Valley Forge and the Valley Forge Park Interpretive Association have supported programs and preservation since the establishment of the park. Many organizations such as Trout Unlimited, the Bell Telephone Pioneers of America and the Lockheed Martin corporate volunteers contribute expertise, time and funds to make the park a special place. A rewarding new partnership with local governments and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has resulted in options for alleviating traffic problems in the area.



The park also is working with the Schuylkill Valley National Heritage Corridor on interpretation of the stories of the valley and with Brandywine Battlefield and Paoli Massacre site groups on a new initiative to raise the visibility of Philadelphia

Campaign historic sites. We work with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and the Valley Creek Watershed Council on restoration of this important stream. Our growing understanding of the high value of the park's natural resources will

lead us to seek an even wider network of connections to organizations and agencies who share the mission of natural resource preservation. Our newest partnership—the National Center for the American Revolution—is described below.

## A New Partnership with the National Center for the American Revolution Offers Unparalleled Educational Opportunities

Valley Forge NHP has entered into a partnership with a new and exciting partner: the National Center for the American Revolution. Established by the U.S. Congress to construct and operate a museum in the park, the partnership will transform educational and visitor experiences for all audiences.

The American Revolution separates humankind's transition from ages of monarchy to one of hope for democratic societies throughout the world. Yet pivotal as it is, there exists no major institution dedicated to celebrating this achievement. The National Center for the American

Revolution will be an outstanding educational and cultural institution. It will attract and serve a broad spectrum of visitors—tourists, students of all ages and serious scholars.

A new and compelling museum will present a comprehensive view of the events leading up to the Revolution, chronicle the war itself, and detail the 1777-78 encampment of General George Washington and the Continental Army at Valley Forge. The museum will display the world's most comprehensive collection of American Revolution artifacts: the co-located collections of the center and the

park, and will provide state-of-the-art curatorial housing for them.

For Valley Forge in particular, the museum will introduce visitors to the stories and significance of the encampment, and serve as a virtual trailhead for touring and experiencing the park. Throughout the park, the partnership will rehabilitate historic structures to house additional partners who can provide engaging public activities and enhance public offerings.

### How the Partnership Was Founded

In the early 20th century, the Reverend Doctor W. Herbert Burke began to collect American Revolution artifacts and documents. His deep interest in the period also led him to establish a library and small museum at Valley Forge, and to institutionalize them as the Valley Forge Historical Society.

(continued on page 4)



# New Options for Smoothing Regional Traffic, Reducing Traffic in the Park

The Valley Forge Area Transportation Planning Study is a joint effort to develop a range of solutions to the traffic and transportation problems of the Valley Forge area. The premise of the study is that only a comprehensive approach will be effective in addressing any of the many interrelated problem spots. The range of options as a group can benefit the park, the surrounding area and the region as a whole.

Participants studied the park as a national resource and in the context of its neighboring communities. Local and county officials were consulted about the concerns of the communities. Problems were quantified using current technical data, including operational deficiencies and congestion in the Route 422 corridor and other major roads in and surrounding the park. The unrealized potential of public transit was explored.

In June 2002, a Draft Report of the Range of Options was circulated to participants and discussed at a public meeting. The Revised Recommendations for Further Action were released in September and discussed at a second public meeting. The report includes improvements in the Route

422 corridor; options to reduce traffic impacts in the park and/or to relocate traffic out of the park; improvements to transit and mobility connections with the park; and options to reduce related traffic problems in nearby areas. An upcoming phase of the study process will continue to refine and assess the options, including opportunities for public comment.

Study participants are investigating the possibility of an early action project that would include major improvements to what has been named the "Corridor Crossing Complex," including the interchanges of Route 363 with 422, replacement of the Betzwood Bridge, and the interchange of Route 23 with 422.

A number of the options that most affect the park and that seem most promising will be incorporated into GMP/EIS alternatives, and will be fully assessed and discussed with the public as part of the GMP/EIS process.

The study is sponsored by the National Park Service, the Federal Highway Administration, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the



Children pose on the bridge over Valley Creek in this circa 1885 photo at the intersection of Route 23 (looking west) and Routh 252. (Washington's Headquarters is just out of sight to the left.) Today this intersection experiences high volumes of commuter traffic.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. Elected and appointed officials from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, Chester and Montgomery counties, and the townships of Lower Providence, Schuylkill, Tredyffrin, Upper Merion and West Norriton directly participated in the study process through steering and advisory committees.

For more information, go to [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org) and click on the Valley Forge Transportation Planning Study icon.

## How the Partnership Was Founded

(continued from page 3)

Almost a century later, the society and the park mutually recognized the high quality and complementary nature of their collections, as well as the need for modern, technically sophisticated facilities to conserve and display these and other important collections. The society formed the National Center for the American Revolution to explore a partnership with the park. The subsequent enactment of Public Law 106-86, the Pennsylvania Battlefields Protection Act of 1999, authorized the building of such a museum within the park.

The mission of the center complements and helps to fulfill the educational mission of Valley Forge NHP. The center's mission is:

*To educate and inform the people of the United States and the international community about the events that took place during the American Revolution, the people who participated in these events, and the legacy of this extremely important period in the history of the United States.*

To fulfill this mission the partnership will:

- create a world-class museum experience utilizing the latest in interpretive techniques to provide a highly educational and entertaining experience suitable to a wide range of audiences;
- provide programming and research opportunities for all audiences, ranging from schoolchildren to scholars;
- establish a state-of-the-art curatorial facility for the co-located collections of the park and the center;
- incorporate these remarkable artifacts and objects as a fundamental element of the visitor experience;
- integrate the indoor museum experience with the experience of the entire historic park through tours, living history and utilization of historic buildings;
- provide tours of the park that will help visitors gain a better sense of the Valley Forge experience and focus on the role of Valley Forge in America's war for independence.

# Alternatives for Remediating the Asbestos Release Site in the Park

In 1997, travelers on County Line Road first saw the fencing and warning signs that announced the closing of approximately 482 acres of the park to public use. Routine construction trenching had turned up a white substance that proved to be asbestos. In May 1998, a Preliminary Assessment, Site Inspection and Hazard Ranking Score report found that the extent of contamination could not fully be determined from limited sampling, and



The Ehret Magnesia Company occupied a disused limestone quarry in what had been the Continental Army's Grand Parade. One of the many former industries in what is now the park, the asbestos industry has left the most enduring effects.

recommended a long-term management program to assess past disposal practices and manage or remove the contamination.

In 1999, an agreement between the NPS and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provided for the state to conduct a remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS) of the asbestos release site. This work will identify the full vertical and horizontal extent of contamination as well as clean-up alternatives. The alternatives may include excavation of contaminants and reburial off-site; burial in place; or consolidation for burial in one area in the park.

From the 1890s to the 1970s, the Ehret Magnesia Company (later the Keene Corporation) manufactured asbestos insulation in a plant on what was at the time private land within the state park. The company routinely disposed of manufacturing waste in slurry by piping it into abandoned limestone quarries in the state park. Other transport methods may have been used for disposal, such as horse carts or trucks. In addition to asbestos, other contaminants of concern

may have been disposed, including volatile organic compounds, polychlorinated biphenyls and heavy metals, and testing is underway to detect those materials.

The GMP/EIS process and the asbestos release site remediation process are separate but interrelated. The GMP/EIS will identify alternative desired futures for management of cultural and natural resources and for visitor use for all areas of the park. Using those desired futures as goals, a separate public process will evaluate in detail the alternatives for cleaning up the asbestos release site and restoring the abandoned mine lands to safe and beneficial public use as parkland.

More information on the asbestos release site at Valley Forge NHP is available at [www.nps.gov/vafo/vafoasbestos/default.htm](http://www.nps.gov/vafo/vafoasbestos/default.htm).

## Partnership Projects Are Underway

The partnership is yielding remarkable results already. Through a \$1,000,000 grant from Exelon Corporation, the park's visitor center has been completely rehabilitated and landscaped. It will provide new exhibits and educational space, as well as an upgraded museum store and food service not only to meet visitor needs but also to help the facility to be self-sustaining. The public opening is on October 12 and 13 and will feature interpretive activities related to the new exhibits.

The visitor center rehabilitation is a pilot project for a much more dramatic

undertaking: the transformation of the park and the establishment of the new museum. Robert A.M. Stern Architects and Haley Sharpe Associates have been selected as lead firms to develop architectural and exhibit alternatives for the museum and for the visitor experience throughout the park. The plans will encompass adaptive reuse of historic buildings that currently are not open to the public, site alternatives for the new museum that will house the combined collections of the park and the center, rethinking trails and roadways in the park, and redesign of the commemorative landscape. Alternatives for each of these elements will be developed as part of the GMP/EIS process.

If you would like to support the National Center for the American Revolution and/or be added to the mailing list to receive information, please send your contact information to:

The Encampment Store  
Valley Forge National Historical Park  
Route 23 and North Gulph Road  
Valley Forge, PA 19482

# Valley Forge Planning Issues that May Be Addressed in the GMP/EIS

The planning process will address a number of problems, issues and concerns to ensure that the park's purpose and mission will be achieved and to maintain the resources and values that are significant. This list of issues is preliminary and meant to stimulate discussion. We invite you to discuss these and other issues in forthcoming public meetings and in responses to this newsletter, to make sure that all relevant issues are considered.

General issues that are addressed in all GMP/EIS processes include:

- How can we ensure that the park and its resources are adequately protected, preserved, restored and/or maintained in good condition?
- What general types and levels of development are needed in order to provide for public enjoyment of the park while assuring no significant adverse impacts on park resources?
- What level and types of visitor uses are appropriate?
- Are boundary modifications appropriate?

Issues specific to Valley Forge NHP that have been identified so far include:

- General George Washington selected Valley Forge for its strategic values, largely based on the area's physical characteristics: easily defended high ground, with long views that enabled him to see any approaching British troops; access to a navigable river and the ability to retreat across it; and open terrain that provided sufficient space to shelter and sustain the encamped army.

The encampment desolated the landscape: farm fields became muddy eroded campsites; forests and fences were cut down for timber and firewood; and houses and barns were occupied as military quarters or storage. This bleak scene was the historic condition.

Yet as soon as the Continental Army left the landscape began to change. On a visit 10 years after the encampment, Washington noted with approval that the huts were gone, the fortifications stood in ruins, and the fields that had been ravaged by the encampment were now returned to productive agriculture.

In the 19th century, the industrial villages of Valley Forge and Port Kennedy thrived, only to be demolished in the 20th century for establishment of a park landscape. Dirt roads in the park were paved and widened and new roads added. Forests were planted, providing essential natural habitat but obscuring some historic vistas. After more than two centuries of change, is selective restoration of the encampment landscape desirable or feasible? What form of commemorative landscape is appropriate? How should the landscape of Valley Forge be managed?

- More than 90% of the park's remaining encampment-era structures need major repairs. This led to the park's designation as one of the "11 Most Endangered Historic Sites" by the National Trust in 2000; designation as one of the "10 Most Endangered National Parks" by the National Park Conservation Association in 2002; and receipt of a "Save America's Treasures" grant for emergency stabilization. Compounding the dilemma is the fact that 77% of the 196 historic structures in the park do not relate to the principal park theme of the encampment, and 40% of them are in poor or fair condition; yet the responsibility for their care remains.

The NPS uses 162 structures – almost all of which are historic – for administrative purposes or quarters. What is the most appropriate use and management of the park's historic structures by the NPS and potential partners?



This 1885 view taken on Gulph Road overlooking the Schuylkill River illustrates the high terrain and long views that made the Valley Forge area a strategic choice for the encampment. The landscape was rural prior to development as a park.

- The park and the surrounding suburbs provide excellent habitat and refuge for large numbers of white-tailed deer. Deer no longer have any natural predators, and hunting is neither feasible in this densely populated area nor permitted by Congressional intent or NPS policy. Browsing by the large deer population has eliminated growth of most native plant species, leaving open ground for invasive and exotic vegetation to take hold. Data and observation suggest that the ability of the native tree species in the forest to regenerate may be threatened. In 2000, the U.S. Congress directed the NPS to develop a plan to address deer management at Valley Forge in the context of the cultural landscape. The GMP process will establish clear objectives for the park landscape, which will be the foundation for a tiered landscape management plan/EIS to follow, with an explicit focus on deer as a factor in landscape management.
- Valley Forge NHP is one of the largest contiguous protected open spaces in southeastern Pennsylvania. It has become an important habitat island that retains a remarkable level of biological diversity. The conversion of surrounding lands to roads and parking lots, housing, office complexes and shopping malls



(continued from previous page)

has severely reduced the quantity and quality of wildlife habitat, thereby increasing the value of these 3,500 acres. For species that migrate, the park functions as an island oasis in a sea of sprawl. For species that cannot migrate to another habitat, the park is essential for their existence and perpetuation.

The park's lands and waters support over 1,400 species of wildlife: including over 220 bird species, 29 species of reptiles and amphibians, 35 fish species, and over 900 plant species. Federally listed endangered and threatened birds migrate through the park. State-listed endangered and threatened plants are barely surviving, due to deer browsing.

What is the best way to protect and perpetuate the biological diversity of species that inhabit or visit the park? How do we manage landscapes that are essential habitats for these species? How do visitors appreciate the natural heritage of the park? How can we provide better opportunities to all visitors to learn about and appreciate the natural significance of Valley Forge? How do we manage the park as a whole so that both the cultural and natural features are protected in perpetuity?

- Approximately 80% of visitors come to the park for recreational pursuits such as walking, biking, boating, horseback riding and picnicking. How can we provide better opportunities to these visitors to learn about and appreciate the historic significance of Valley Forge? What is the appropriate recreational carrying capacity of the park—the capacity to accommodate visitor use without significantly impairing resources and allowing overcrowding?
- In addition to its research role, the future National Center for the American Revolution will become the museum and welcome center for the park. What is the best location within the park for this new facility? What is the best way for the center to function as a programmatic and physical gateway to the park?



As early as the first decades of the 19th century, visitors were attracted to Valley Forge for festive gatherings and recreation. In this early 20th century image, a group enjoys a baseball game in a field along present-day Route 23 (looking west).

■ Several of the historic roads in the park are open to through traffic. Route 252 handles an average annual daily traffic volume (AADT) of 7,000 vehicles; the AADT for Route 23 at Washington's Headquarters is 15,000 vehicles. These "walls of traffic" effectively cut off certain areas of the park from the core area and endanger bicyclists and slow-moving vehicles driven by visitors who want to see the park. A proposal to rebuild the Betzwood Bridge across the

Schuylkill River could bring many additional thousands of vehicles a day into the park. Which of the options proposed by the recent Valley Forge Area Transportation Planning Study will best protect cultural and natural resources, enable high quality visitor experiences, and contribute to the unsnarling of the region's knotty traffic problems?

Please respond to these and any other issues you might identify by filling out the inserted response form.

## How You Can Be Involved

Public participation is essential to the success of the planning process. Your input will help the NPS learn about the concerns, issues, expectations and desires of visitors, neighbors, interested citizens, interest groups and others. We will share information and seek your response at key points in the process. We will communicate through newsletters such as this, news releases, public open houses, meetings and tours, and posts on the park's web site.

You can begin your involvement by completing the enclosed comment form. Please let us know your goals, concerns, and thoughts on what should be considered in the planning process. You can reply electronically if you prefer by logging on to the park's web site at [www.nps.gov/vafo](http://www.nps.gov/vafo). All newsletters and other information will be posted there. You can receive information through the mail by returning the enclosed form.

The park will hold public open houses to discuss the planning processes described in this newsletter on October 23. Please see the times and locations listed on the back of this newsletter.

The schedule on the final page – summarizes the major steps in the planning process and opportunities for you to get involved. We are in step one of the process.

# Your Thoughts on Valley Forge National Historical Park

Please use this sheet to tell us your thoughts about how you would like to see Valley Forge NHP managed in the future, and what issues and concerns you believe the planning process should address.

Please attach additional sheets if you wish. When you are finished, please fold this form in the middle so that the mailing address is visible, tape it, add a stamp, and drop it in the mail. You can log on to [www.nps.gov/vafo](http://www.nps.gov/vafo) to fill out and send this form electronically. You may also send

comments at any time by e-mail to [vafo\\_gmp@nps.gov](mailto:vafo_gmp@nps.gov). To ensure that we can consider your responses to the questions below, please mail back your response by October 25.

Please be aware that due to public disclosure requirements, the NPS must make the names and addresses of commenters public, if requested. However, you may request that your information not be released. If you wish to withhold your name and/or

address you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. NPS will determine whether the information may be withheld under the Freedom of Information Act, and will honor your request to the extent allowed by law. We will not consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection.

**What would you like Valley Forge NHP to be like in the future? Imagine yourself visiting the park 20 years from now. Describe what you would like to see and experience at that time.**

**What are your greatest concerns about the future of the park?**

**What issues do you feel the GMP/EIS planning process should address?**

**Is there anything else you would like the planning team to know?**





National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Valley Forge National Historical Park  
PO Box 953  
Route 23 & North Gulph Road  
Valley Forge, Pennsylvania 19482

Valley Forge National Historical Park  
PO Box 953  
Route 23 & North Gulph Road  
Valley Forge, Pennsylvania 19482

.....  
To mail back, fold here and tape below

Would you prefer to receive information by email? If so, please legibly print your name and email address below.

If the mailing label we used is incorrect, please affix your mailing label or print your name and address below and indicate any corrections in the space below.

Name  
Organization and your title, if any  
Address  
City/State/Zip  
email

- \_\_\_\_ The name or address used to mail this newsletter was incorrect  
(please change it as indicated above or see affixed mailing label)  
\_\_\_\_ Add me to the mailing list  
\_\_\_\_ Remove me from the mailing list  
\_\_\_\_ Withhold my name from the public record  
\_\_\_\_ Send me information about the National Center for the American Revolution



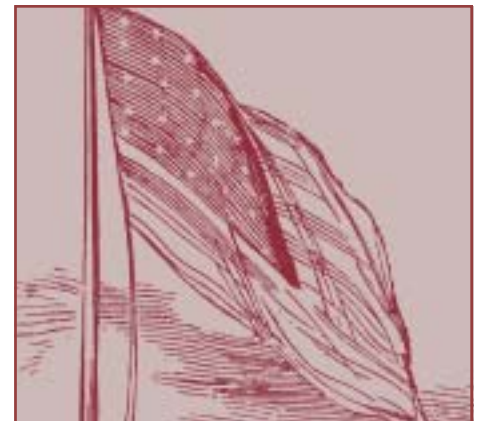
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Valley Forge National Historical Park  
PO Box 953  
Route 23 & North Gulph Road  
Valley Forge, Pennsylvania 19482

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

## Timeline for the GMP/EIS

Step	Planning Activity	Dates	Public Involvement Opportunities	Dates
1	Collect data; assess resources; determine issues and concerns	2000-2002	Attend public open houses and/or write to the park to share goals and concerns	Fall 2002
2	Develop conceptual management alternatives	Fall 2002	Attend public open houses and/or write to the park to provide review and comments on the conceptual alternatives.	Winter 2002-03
3	Revise conceptual management alternatives	Winter 2003	Attend public workshops and/or write to the park to provide review and comments on the revised conceptual alternatives.	Spring 2003
4	Develop and Publish Draft GMP/EIS	Fall 2003	Attend public meetings and/or write to the park to provide review and comments on the draft GMP/EIS	Winter 2003-04
5	Develop and Publish Final GMP/EIS	Spring 2004		



### *You're invited*

**This newsletter invites you to join in planning initiatives for Valley Forge National Historical Park. Please come to the first public open houses:**

Wednesday, October 23  
3:00 to 5:00 pm or 7:00 to 9:00 pm  
Visitor Center, Second Floor  
*park in the upper lot*